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Malcolm Simpson, P.R.O. St Senans RFC

Rugby: Ballina tame plucky Limerick visitors

By: Clive Moore in Heffernan Park, Ballina

James Hoban Cup

BALLINA 20 ST SENNAN'S (LIMERICK) 14

BALLINA secured the first trophy of the season when they overcame the challenge of Limerick side St Senan's last Sunday. It proved to be a very entertaining and well contested run out for both sides and should prove good preparation for both teams in the run up to their respective leagues.

St Senan's were an archetypical Munster team, with a strong pack of forwards which put pressure on early on in the scrums and proved very dogged and determined at the breakdown where they turned over ball in the ruck on several occasions. It will be of concern to Ballina that again in this area they came off second best for much of the game, although there was some improvement as the game progressed.

When in possession Ballina proved to be creative and incisive, generally handling the ball quite well. At out-half Andy Moynihan kicked well out of hand gaining good territory for his side while full-back Robert Forbes had an excellent game once again, both in defence and attack.

Scrum-half and captain, Michael Murphy, marshalled his troops well and was a constant thorn in the Munster men's side.

It was Murphy who eventually made the breakthrough on 20 minutes after Ballina had put together a series of phases in attack; he broke from the base of a ruck and got clean through, rounding the St Senan's full-back before scoring under the posts. Andrew Moynihan kicked over the conversion giving his side a 7-0 lead.

St Senan's responded immediately and with some powerful ball carrying from their forwards they piled on the pressure. Ballina's defensive organisation stood up well to this pressure and the Limerick side gained no tangible reward from all their effort.

Instead, when Ballina broke out and upped the ante themselves, they forced St Senan's into conceding a penalty which Andy Moynihan put over to extend Ballina's lead to 10-0.

The scoreline remained unchanged at the break. Ballina used all their substitutions during the match but regardless of personnel, kept their shape and focus all through. Soon they added to their tally when they forced a kickable penalty which Andy Moynihan put over and with 20 minutes to go, the best try of the game was scored when an attacking play was initiated by a devastating run by Robert Forbes. He beat several players and in an exciting passage of play that involved almost every Ballina player handling the ball, Conor Forde charged for the corner flag and skilfully off

loaded in the tackle to the supporting Michael Clarke who ran in to score under the posts.

Ciaran Rouse added the conversion and with a 20-0 lead Ballina put on their final substitutions.

The hosts were forced to defend for much of the remainder of the game as the Limerick side pounded the line with wave after wave of determined attack. The Ballina defence held up well but it was just reward when John Elstry crossed the line for a good try for the Munster men.

Scrum-half Darren Guerin kicked the conversion and following another sustained period of pressure, David Dunne powered over for another try for St Senan's. Guerin's conversion, which brought the score to 20-14, was the final act of an enthralling game.

Many played well for Ballina but Conor Molloy, Stephen McCarron, Michael Murphy, Cormac Quinn and Robert Forbes in the backline were particularly impressive as were Tyrone De Silva and Ciaran Rouse when they came on. In the forwards Mark Healy, Conor Forde, Ciaran Melvin and Tom Tolan stood out in a pack which was very competitive.

Training continues Wednesday and Friday at 8pm as Ballina prepare for their opening league match at home against Buccaneers on Sunday, September 20.

BALLINA: Ciaran Melvin, Paul Newell, Tom Tolan, Marc Healy, James Cawley, Stephen Dolan, Orrie Collins, Conor Forde, Michael Murphy (C), Andrew Moynihan, Alan Jennings, Stephen McCarron, Cormac Quinn, Conor Molloy, Robert Forbes. Replacements: Richard Kelly, John Keaveney, Danny Carrabine, Shane Loftus, Michael Clarke, Tyrone De Silva, Ciaran Rouse, Darragh McDonagh, Brian Langan, Phillip Thornton.

St SENNAN'S: Pat Ryan, Fergal Lawler, Tony O'Brien, Aidan O'Callaghan, Jack Jones, Ian Fitzgerald, Duane Horkan, Aaron Skerritt, Darren Guerin, Fran Duggan, Brian Collins, Diarmuid Hughes, Chris Sloane, Declan Coughlan, Declan Collins. Replacements: Paul O'Halloran, John Elstry, Stephen Hearne, David Dunne, Mark Egan.

Referee: Paul Jennings.